

Public records stored as digital images: policy statement

South Carolina Department of Archives and History **Archives and Records Management Division**

Policy statement

The South Carolina Department of Archives and History placed this policy into effect on 24 June 2005. It supercedes the policy placed into effect on 5 September 2003.

Purpose

This policy clarifies the position of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History regarding the use of digital imaging technology for the maintenance of public records, as defined by Section 30-4-20(C) of the *Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976*, as amended.

Authority

Sections 30-1-80 through 30-1-100 of the *Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976*, as amended, provide the authority for the establishment of this policy.

Scope

This policy statement applies to the records of all public bodies as defined by Section 30-1-10 of the *Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976*, as amended.

Statement

To ensure accessibility, reduce the risk of premature disposition, and preserve records of permanent (archival) value, the following policy is established for the disposition of public records stored as digital images:

This policy does not supercede existing federal, state, or local laws and regulations that require the maintenance of public records and documents in a prescribed format.





Records with an established retention of less than ten years

State and local government officials can maintain public records that have an established retention¹ of less than ten years in a digital imaging records system and can dispose of the originals after certifying that the digital image records have been visually inspected and are legible and correct and after receiving an authorization for disposal of original records from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. If the records are vital records, a security copy should be stored off-site in a secure location.

Records with an established retention of ten years or more

State and local government officials can maintain public records with an established retention² of ten years or more in a digital imaging records system and dispose of the originals provided they:

1. ensure the production of appropriate indexes or other finding aids that will provide access to the information contained in the records
2. maintain security copies of the digital records and indexes in secure off-site storage
3. migrate and convert both the working and security copies of the digital records and indexes either every ten years or sooner if access to them is no longer possible because the digital imaging records system has been upgraded or changed
4. sample both the working and security copies of the digital records and indexes at least once a year to make sure the data is still readable and recopy immediately if loss of information is detected
5. certify that the digital image records have been visually inspected and are legible and correct
6. certify that they have established written procedures and maintain written documentation of compliance with 2-5 above
7. obtain an authorization for disposal of original records *in advance* from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

Those not able to ensure compliance with 1-7 for the established retention period must retain a paper record or a microform that meets state standards. ³

If the original medium for the records is digital — as it is, for example, with the procedural or transactional recording of deeds — we *highly recommend* the generation and retention of paper copies or microforms that meet state standards.⁴ If paper or microform copies are not generated and retained for such records,

¹ Retention values must be established through approved records retention schedules developed in accordance with section 30-1-90 of the *Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976*, as amended.

² Ibid.

³ Microfilm should meet the state standards set out in "Quality Standards and Practices for the Microfilming of Public Records" (Regulations 12-200 through 12-203, *Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976*, as amended)

⁴ Ibid.



state and local government officials *must* give the Archives written certification of their compliance with 1-7 above before using the digital imaging records system.

Recommendations for
the selection and use
of digital imaging
records systems

For current guidelines and best practices, see the Digital Imaging section of the *Electronic Records Management Guidelines*, available at www.state.sc.us/scdah/erg/ermDI.pdf

For questions
and comments

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